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The Eternal Player

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमे

He who seeth Me everywhere, and seeth everything in Me,
Of him will I never lose hold, and he shall never lose hold of Me.

(*Bhagavadgītā* VI. 30)

Vol. XVII] November 1951 [No. 4

अंसालम्बितवामकुण्डलधरं मन्दोन्नतभ्रूलतं
किञ्चित्कुञ्चितकोमलाधरपुटं साचिप्रसारेक्षणम् ।
आलोलाङ्गुलिपल्लवे मुरलिकामापूरयन्तं मुदा
मूले कल्पतरोस्त्रिभङ्गललितं ध्यायेज्जगन्मोहनम् ॥

—*Līlāśuka*

"One should fix one's thought on Him who is the maddening wonder of all the three worlds, who stands with triple lovely bends at the foot of a celestial tree, who has His left ear-drop hanging on the shoulder (His head being inclined on the left side), whose eyebrows are slightly raised, charming lips a bit contracted and eyes shooting side long glances, and who with deftly-moving finger-tips rapturously fills the holes of the flute with His breath (and floods the worlds with entrancing music)."

Unto Bliss

Remember: so long as your mind is attached to the pleasures of sense, so long as you are keen to retain your passion for sensuous enjoyments—so long as you seek to perpetuate your body, wealth, wife, progeny, land, honour, reputation etc., regarding them as your own, and so long as you feel perturbed and worried, dejected and sad at heart on their account, you have not yet commenced treading the Godward path.

Remember: until you overcome your charm for the pleasures of sense you cannot turn your face towards God. He who seeks to proceed towards the east must turn his back on the west. Similarly it is not possible to walk on the Godward path without turning one's back on sensuous enjoyments.

Remember: they who recognize the attainment of worldly wealth and prosperity, sons and grandsons, honour and fame, rank and position etc. as a token of divine grace know not the secret of grace. The attainment of these intensifies one's charm for them and keeps one engrossed day and night in their thought alone. Thought of the pleasures of sense successively leads to attachment, desire, anger or greed, infatuation, loss of memory and loss of reason, and finally to loss of everything—degradation of the soul. How, then, can there be any divine grace in the attainment of objects that put God out of mind and thereby lead to a spiritual fall? Rather it is losing sight of the divine grace. Divine grace is there only when the mind gets solely devoted to the thought of God.

Remember: divine grace consists in the uninterrupted and undivided thought of God. Thought of God, remembrance of God, alone is real wealth; while forgetfulness of God is the greatest misfortune—

विपदो नैव विपदः सम्पदो नैव सम्पदः ।
विपद् विस्मरणं विष्णोः सम्पन्नारायणस्मृतिः ॥

"Worldly misfortune (in the shape of loss of men and money, honour and fame) is no misfortune and worldly prosperity (in the shape of their acquisition) is no prosperity. Forgetfulness of Lord Viṣṇu alone is adversity and remembrance of Lord Nārāyaṇa is prosperity."

For remembrance of God leads to the realization of God, who is supreme bliss personified; while thought of the pleasures of sense, accompanied by forgetfulness of God, leads to perdition.

Remember: if you seek to tread the Godward path, you will have to give up the infatuation for the pleasures of sense. Then, if the objects of worldly enjoyment remain with you, they will serve as wherewithals for the worship of the Lord and you will be worshipping the Lord by discharging your own duties with their help. So long as you are engaged in worshipping the pleasures of sense, you are removed from the Godward path.

Remember: the Lord does not appear in a place stinking with the dirt of sensuality. Even if He comes, He goes into hiding. Therefore, cleanse your heart first; then will you be able to have a charming vision of the Lord therein.

Remember: the Lord cannot be had by any outward show. Suppose you

changed your garb, changed your abode, adopted a particular pose and effected other external changes too. If resorted to purely by way of spiritual discipline, even these external aids are good; but they are not real aids. If you take these external aids alone as everything and deem yourself a striver or a pious soul, you will be deceived and suffer.

Remember: so long as your mind, your intellect, does not take to the thought of God, so long as your mind does not get constantly devoted to the thought of the Lord, external aids are of no avail.

Remember: if your life is frittered away without tasting the nectar of unbroken remembrance of God, there can be no greater loss than this. Every moment of your life should be devoted to the sweet and happy thought of the Lord; then alone is your life fulfilled and shall have reaped the highest good.

"*Śiva*"

(*Kalyan*)

Adwaita and Bhakti—XXI

(*Continued from the previous number*)

—By S. Lakshminarasimha Sastri, B. A.

The next stalwart Adwaiti who was nevertheless a very great Kṛṣṇa Bhakta, was Madhusūdana Saraswatī Śrīpāda. The knight-errant of Adwaita Siddhānta, leading a deadly crusade against the rival dualistic philosophic systems and vanquishing them with the sharp yet ponderous lance of subtle and dizzying logic—this great Achārya could nevertheless find time to contemplate tenderly on the bewitching Form of his Beloved Kṛṣṇa! So great indeed is his Bhakti for Śrī Kṛṣṇa that he cannot help commencing even a highly polemical work like the Adwaitaratna-Rakṣaṇa with a Mangala Śloka addressed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. "I contemplate" writes Madhusūdana, "on that divinely Human Form of that Supreme Brahma that, abiding in the vast woodlands of Bṛndāvana, sports in sheer joy, surrounded and embraced by the love-intoxicated Gopa damsels!"

बृहदारण्यनिविष्टं विलुठितमाभीरवारनारीभिः ।
सत्यचिदानन्दघन नराकारमालम्ब

And in his Gūḍhārtha-Dīpikā, that commentary on the *Gītā* next in importance only to the Śānkara Bhāṣya, he even goes to the extent of courageously choosing to differ from the Bhagavatpāda in declaring that the ontology of the *Gītā* is Abheda Bhakti and not Jñāna as the Bhagavatpāda would maintain. And he concludes his masterly Gūḍhārtha-Dīpikā with the very simple, yet touching verse—"We know naught other than—no Reality higher than—Śrī Kṛṣṇa, poising the Muralī with His fingers, dark as the rain-laden cloud, dressed in Pītāmbara, with lips ruddy as the Bimbā fruit, with the face that shames the full moon in its cool splendour, with the eyes bewitchingly tender, like the lotus in full bloom."

वंशीविभूषितकरान्नवनीरदाभात्
पीताम्बरादरुणबिम्बफलाधरोष्ठात् ।
पूर्णेन्दुसुन्दरमुखादरविन्दनेत्रात्
कृष्णात्परं किमपि तत्त्वमहं न जाने ॥

And elsewhere too he declares, "Let those Yogīs, fixed in meditation, contemplate on the Reality that is Qualityless, Impartite, and realize the Nirguṇa Brahma and experience it too, if they can. But, for us, may only that Supreme Azure Radiance, ever sporting on the banks of the Kālindī,—may only that Śrī Kṛṣṇa ever delight our vision."—

ध्यानाभ्यासवशीकृतेन मनसा यन्निर्गुणं निष्क्रियं
ज्योतिः किंचन योगिनो यदि परं पश्यन्ति पश्यन्तु ते ।
अस्माकं तु तदेव लोचनचमत्काराय भूयाच्चिरं
कालिन्दीपुलिनेषु यत्किमपि तन्नीलं महो धावति ॥

And, be it noted, this is Madhusūdana Saraswatī, the staunchest Adwaitī and the formidable logician speaking ! But, no wonder. How indeed could it be otherwise with that master mind who could write that superb grammar on Bhakti Śāstra, the *Bhagavad-Bhakti-Rasāyana ?* And what indeed shall we say of the splendid lyricism, and the depth of chaste emotion that characterizes that long poem of his, the Ānanda-Mandākinī ? The great Āchārya simply loses himself in that vision of Yaśodā fondling her Kṛṣṇa and gathering the wondrous Babe to her bosom, wherefrom course rivulets of milk welling forth in love for her darling, her eyes bedimmed with tears of joy, and a tender smile playing on her face ! And that Boy ! what a marvel of Beauty, with His curls stained with the dust raised from the feet of the cows, with His face that far outshines the splendour of the moon on the Pūrṇimā, with His Kuṇḍalas dangling dingle-dangle in His ears, and with those unsteady looks, maddening the three worlds ! What wonder if Yaśodā, overpowered by that madness of love, should gather the Child close in embrace, and drink deep of His lips ? What wonder if Madhusūdana, enraptured at this vision should exclaim :—

धूलीधूसरितं मुखं तव क्षरत्पूर्णेन्दुनिन्दावहं
व्यालोलालककुण्डलद्युति चलन्नेत्रश्रिया प्रोल्लसत् ।
याऽऽलोक्यार्द्रविलोचना स्मितमुखी प्रस्यन्दमानस्तनी
पाणिभ्यामवलम्ब्य चुम्बितवती तां नन्दजायां भजे ॥
(*Ānanda-Mandākinī* 63)

Again, the roseate tenderness of the palms of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's hands, tender as the fresh blown lotus, evokes a superb poetic conceit in Madhusūdana, of yore, when Prahlāda was tormented by his unnatural parent, moved by solicitude for His long suffering Bhakta, He assumed the terrific Form of Nṛsiṃha and lacerated with His fingers the stubborn bosom of the benighted Hiraṇyakaśipu. And the gore that spouted forth from his bosom did His hands incarnadine. And this red of His palm was doubly rendered so, when with His tender palms he caressed, in love, the bosoms of the Gopis dyed with saffron ! And, wonder ! the dye has come to stay for ever in His hand !

भक्तानुग्रहकातरेण भवता कृत्वा नृसिंहाकृतिं
रागान्धस्य पुरा हिरण्यकशिपोर्वक्षःस्थली पाटिता ।
तेनाभूत्तव पाणिपङ्कजयुगे रागः स राधापते
गोपीनां कुचकुङ्कुमैर्द्विगुणितो नाद्यापि विश्राम्यति ॥
(*Ibid.*, 33)

What superb efflorescence of Poesy ! what fervour ! what Bhakti !—And all this is the effusion of Madhusūdana Saraswatī Śrīpāda, the lion among Vedāntīs, the wielder of the Thunderbolt of Adwaita-Siddhi !

If the great Madhusūdana is steeped to his innermost being in Kṛṣṇa Bhakti, Paramahaṃsa Sannyāsī and cold Adwaitī as he is, his great disciple, lesser than Madhusūdana alone, and greater than almost all the other Vedāntīs,—that great Āchārya, the subtlety of whose logic confounds the astutest Tārkikas, that Master Intellect—the great Brahmānanda Saraswatī, again, is a great Bhakta, his Adwaitic conviction alone being equal to his Bhakti. And, Nirguṇa Brahmajñānī as he is, his heart nevertheless swells with such overpowering Bhakti for Hari that, overawed by the sheer Majesty of Īśwara, he exclaims with great trepidation—"Oh Bhagavan! The thought of whatever evil deeds I have done in the past rankles in my mind, and my heart trembles in fear, at the enormity of my offences. But wherefore need I fear? Art Thou not justly famed as the saviour of even sinners? Hence Thee I approach in surrender entire."—

पूर्वं कृतानि दुरितानि मया तु यानि
स्मृत्वाखिलानि हृदयं परिकम्पते मे ।
ख्याता च ते पतितपावनता तु यस्मात्
तस्मात्त्वमेव शरणं मम शङ्खपाणे ॥

(*Śrī Hariśaraṇāṣṭakam*)

And towards the evening of his memorable life, this great Āchārya, with an indescribable Peace abiding in his heart, looks forward eagerly to that supreme moment when, having cast off this mortal coil even as the snake doffs its slough, having attained the Divine likeness of the Lord, with four arms holding the Chakra and Padma, clothed in Pītāmbara, dark as the raincloud, he is to be led by the emissaries of the Bhagavān, unto the Abode of Viṣṇu, above all the turmoils of life, whence none lapses again into Saṃsāra.

कदा हित्वा जीर्णां त्वचमिव भुजंगस्तनुमिमां
चतुर्बाहुश्चक्राम्बुजधरकरः पीतवसनः ।
घनश्यामो दूतैर्गगनगतिनीतो नतिपरै-
र्गमिष्यामीशस्यान्तिकमखिलदुःखान्तकरणम् ॥

(*Abhilāṣāṣṭakam*, 8)

And there, in that Abode of Vaikuṇṭha, the Āchārya longs to feast his eyes on that effulgent Form of the Lord, mounted on the shoulders of Garuḍa, with eyes tender as the lotus in full bloom, held in fond embrace by Śrī Lakṣmī, splendid dight in His Pītāmbara, wielding the Gadā, the Śankha, the Padma and the Chakra.

कदा पक्षीन्द्रांसोपरिगतमजं कंजनयनं
रमासंश्लिष्टाङ्गं गगनरुचमापीतवसनम् ।
गदाशङ्खाम्भोजारिवरकरमालोक्य सुचिरं
गमिष्यत्येतन्मे ननु सफलतां नेत्रयुगलम् ॥

(*Ibid.* 1)

Let none therefore dare say, after studying the utterances of the great Brahmānanda, that Adwaitīs do not subscribe to the doctrine of Salokya, Sārūpya, Sāmīpya and Sāyujya Mukti! Let none again blazon forth the oft-repeated fable that Adwaita discredits Bhakti towards the Saguṇeśwara!

The next Titan in the domain of Adwaita Vedānta—nay, in many other, Śāstras as well—the great Appayya Dīkṣitendra is no less a Bhakta than he is a Vedantī. If there is a name in the domain of Indian Philosophy that commands universal respect even from non-Adwaitīs, it is the honoured name of Appayya Dīkṣita, that master mind whose versatility is indeed something prodigious. He rarely touches anything which he does not

adorn—an honour which he shares with two other names of hallowed memory, Śrī Vāchaspati Miśra and Śrī Vidyāraṇya. And this Intellectual Giant could nevertheless be a humble Bhakta. Why, he loudly declares the utter futility of eloquent discourse, vast erudition and wide mastery of the Śāstras. What avail these?—Not through these can Bhakti unto Īśwara dawn in the heart of man, save through His Grace, and through His Grace alone! How then could pert, self-conceited mankind hope to attain Bhakti unto Him?

त्वयि श्रद्धा नाथ प्रवचनबलान्नैव सुलभा
न मेधाबाहुल्यान्न न च विविधशास्त्रेषु घटनात् ।
प्रसादादेवैनां भुवि तव लभन्ते सुकृतिन-
स्ततस्ते दुर्दान्ताः कथमिव लभेरन् कुमतयः ॥

(*Śiva-Tattwa-Viveka*)

Bhakti unto the lotus feet of the Lord, Bhakti that dispels all grief that flesh is heir to and confers eternal Beatitude,—that Bhakti is not so easy to attain either. Without the Puṇya Vāsanā, the cumulative merits of past births, gathered through hundreds of thousands of previous lives, how could devotion to Īśwara, beset with so many pitfalls, dawn in the heart of frail man?

तव श्रीपादाब्जे कथमपि च भक्तिर्न सुलभा
निहन्त्री दुःखानां निखिलपुरुषार्थैकवसतिः ।
विना पुण्यैर्जन्मान्तरशतसहस्रेषु विहितै-
र्नरः श्रेयोमात्रं बहुलविघ्नं न लभते ॥

(*Ibid.*)

But the vast majority of mankind, playthings that they are of ignorance, avarice, infatuation and fanaticism, glide down the primrose path that leads to perdition—without even turning their eyes to the lotus feet of Śiva. But the wise, who have indeed well understood the drift of all the Śāstras, cannot do otherwise than surrender themselves entirely, with all their progeny and helpmates and kinsmen unto the Lord.

भ्रमाल्लोभान्मोहान्मतदुरभिमानादपि वृथा
नयन्त्यायुर्नाशं बत शिवपदाम्भोजविमुखाः ।
वयं तावत्सर्वे सहसुतकलत्रादिभिरिमे
भवामस्ते दासा इति मतिरियं मेऽस्तु सुदृढा ॥

(*Ibid.*)

And the inscrutable ways of Īśwara! Does He not pretend to incarnate on this earth to dispel the ignorance and infatuation of the denizens of this world? And yet, on the contrary, does He not, with His splendid Form, splendid as the rain-laden cloud, aggravate the Moha of the world? Does He not madden the world with His ravishing Beauty as He did the Gopis of yore?

मोहं जगत्त्रयभुवामपनेतुमेत-
दादाय रूपमखिलेश्वर देहभाजाम् ।
निस्सीमकान्तिरसनीरधिनामुनैव
मोहं प्रवर्धयसि मुग्धविलासिनीनाम् ॥

(*Varadarājastava*)

And, indeed, who would not be maddened, intoxicated, by drinking in that splendour of the bosom, adorned with the manly down, rising from the navel upwards,—adorned again with strings of purest pearls?

ऊर्ध्वं विरिञ्चिभवनात्तव नाभिपद्माद्
रोमावलीपदजुषः तमसः परस्तात् ।
मुक्तौघमण्डितमुरःस्थलमुन्मयूखं
पश्यामि देव परमं पदमेव साक्षात् ॥

(*Ibid.*)

So fervid, indeed, is the Bhakti of the great Appayya Dīkṣita, a Bhakti that throbs through every vein of every verse of this great Adwaiti. And his worthy

and illustrious kinsman, the great Nilakaṇṭha Dīkṣita, does not yield a whit to his ancestor in the fervour of his Bhakti. With child-like simplicity he utters: "Oh Mother Divine, however much distracted by other objects and interests, my heart refuses to be torn away from Thy feet."

अन्यत्र देवि भवदीयपदारविन्दा-
दाकृष्यमाणमपि मे हृदयं न याति ।

(*Ānandasāgarastava*)

And, what is the end of all learning ?—all erudition in the Śrutis, the Āgamas and the Dharma-Śāstras, unless such erudition should engender the conviction that She, the Divine Mother, alone is worthy of worship and that She alone would save us from Saṃsāra ?

किंचिन्मया श्रुतिषु किंचिदिवागमेषु
शास्त्रेषु किंचिदुपदेशपदेषु किंचित् ।
आघ्रातमस्ति भवती यदतो वरीतुं
गोप्त्रीति काचिदुपपद्यत बुद्धिरेषा ॥

(*Ibid.*)

Nor do we covet untold wealth, elephants, horses and women, even if She were to offer them all unto us. We would have none of such ephemeral things—even like Nachiketā of old! But what we pray for is that Supreme Grace of the Mother, that Grace which Viṣṇu and Śiva covet to possess, which no amount of Tapas can secure, and which the worldlings can never even aspire to.

दद्यां रत्नसुवर्णदन्तितुरगप्रायां रमामित्यसा-
वास्तां वञ्चनचातुरी दिशसि चेद् देहीदमेकं वृणे ।
आशास्यं हरिशंकरादिभिरनाहार्यं वराकैः परै-
रप्राप्यं तपसापि तावकदयासाम्राज्यसिंहासनम् ॥

(*Nalacharitra-Nāṭaka*)

And such is the devotion of Nilakaṇṭha Dīkṣita. Curiously enough, it is the Paramahaṃsa Sannyāsīs, disciplined in the arid Adwaita Vedanta technique, that turn with fervour to Bhakti unto Īśwara. What can compare with the intense Bhakti pulsating through every word of the Bhāvārtha-Dīpikā, that incomparable commentary of Śrīdharaswāmī on the Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa ? And those rapturous outbursts of poetry, describing the enchanting Līlās of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, the author of the *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Līlā-Taranginī* ? The Swāmī is indeed so much swept off his feet by the tide of Bhakti that he bursts into exquisite music describing Kṛṣṇa in the midst of the Gopīs during the Rāsa-Līlā as the one Turquoise, set between two opals, literally smothered in heap of fragrant Mallikā, Champaka and Jāti, the very quintessence of Beauty.

वल्लवीमाणिक्यमणियुगलमध्ये
मरकतमणिच्छायमदनगोपालम् ।
मल्लिकाजातिचम्पकादिसुमभारं
महनीयलावण्यललिततरपूरम् ॥
गोविन्दमिह गोपिकानन्दकन्दं
सानन्दमवलोकयामो मुकुन्दम् ॥

What, again, shall we say of the earnest Bhakti of Bodhendra of hallowed memory, who undertook the arduous task of *Nāmasiddhānta*, and established therein the supreme efficacy of the Divine Name alone to secure Mukti for mankind, and wrote masterly theses like the *Nāmāmṛta-Rasāyana* and *Nāmāmṛta-Rasodaya* in support thereof ? And, again, what can compare with the Bhakti of that revered personality, the great Śrīdhara Venkateśa, another advocate of the Nāmasiddhānta, whose *Ākhya-Ṣaṣṭi* and *Śivabhakti-Kalpalatikā* bespeak his intense Śiva-

Bhakti? And who can miss the sublime earnestness of Śrīdhara Venkateśa's *Kṛṣṇa-dwādaśamañjarī*, wherein with awestruck humility he exclaims, "Where indeed is Bhakti unto Thy sacred Feet, Oh Kṛṣṇa—those Feet bearing which in their minds Brahmā, Śiva and the other celestials get steeped in supreme Bliss? And where am I, the vilest of the vile? Verily, is it not as if a cur should covet the throne of Indra?"

कथंचिद्यान्यन्न कमलभवकामान्तकमुखा
वहन्तो मज्जन्ति स्वयमनवधौ हर्षजलधौ ।
क्व तद्दिव्यश्रीमच्चरणकमलं कृष्ण भवतः
क्व चाहं तत्रेहा मम शुन इवाखण्डलपदे ॥

And then, in utter helplessness, he cries aloud unto the Lord to shed His grace on Him—"Blinded by avarice and the other evil desires, I have fallen into this Saṃsāra, like the cow, which, greedy to get a mouthful of grass growing on the edge of a well, loses its foothold and gets hurled into the dark pit. Relieve my suffering, and raise this hapless being, Oh Lord, from this abjectness. When indeed shall I be blessed with Bhakti for Thy Feet?"

दुराशान्धोऽमुष्मिन् विषयविसरानर्थजठरे
तृणच्छन्ने कूपे तृणकवललुब्धः पशुरिव ।
पतित्वा खिद्येऽसावगतिरित्युद्धृत्य कलये:
कदा मां कृष्ण त्वत्पदकमललाभेन सुखितम् ॥

And this great Adwaitī could again wax so tenderly eloquent, almost like a mother, and melt away, as it were, in Vātsalya for Śrī Kṛṣṇa in his *Dolānavaratnalālikā*, a lullaby unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa. "Him do we extol—that wonderous Babe, azure-hued like the Indranīlamaṇi, adorned with ear pendants wrought of costliest gems, bedecked with beauteous garlands and bracelets and peacock plumes, that Marvel of Infancy that adorns the royal cradle, adored of all adored of Śrīdhara."

माणिक्यकुण्डलमनोहरतारहारा-
द्युद्दामभूषमुपबर्हनिविष्टबाहुम् ।
तं श्रीधराश्रितपदं श्रितदिव्यदोलं
बालं नुमः कमपि वासवरत्ननीलम् ॥

What fervour! what tender poesy! what Bhakti! And the Vision of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, reclining in the cradle sucking the toe of His tender Foot, evokes a flowery poetic conceit from this great Bhakta! Sucking the toe of His Foot with indescribable relish, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, lying on the downy cradle, seems to tell all those that are in the quest of Amṛta (nectar): "Behold ye that hanker after Amṛta! Whither wander ye? Here, in these very Feet abides that Amṛta. Do I not Myself delight in tasting it for ever?—May that Prince of Babes ever abide in us."

अत्रामृतं प्रविचकास्त्यमृतार्थिनां त-
दासेव्यमेतदिति बोधयितुं पदं स्वम् ।
आस्ये निधाय रसयन्नधिरत्नदोल-
मग्रेऽस्तु मेऽग्ररुचिरार्भकसार्वभौमः ॥

If, in recent years, there has been a real Brahma-Niṣṭha, firmly rooted in his conviction that he is verily Brahma, who could roar forth with the majesty of a lion "Am I not indeed the Brahma? Self-luminous, Secondless, Fearless, beyond all thought, Indestructible, Incorporeal?—(ब्रह्मैवाहं किल, स्वप्रकाशशिवमद्वयमभयं निष्प्रतर्क्यमनपायमकायम् ।) who again wandered through the entire length and breadth of this land, like Śuka and Vāmadeva of old, hallowing the very ground he trod on, that was

Sadāśiva Brahmendra, certainly a gigantic Intellect, but nevertheless the highest self-realized soul! And he, for whom all this was nothing but the Nirguṇa Brahma सर्वं ब्रह्ममयं and for whom there was nothing to be worshipped and nothing not to be worshipped—किं भजनीयं किमभजनीयं this Brahmaniṣṭha could nevertheless rapturously exclaim "खेलति मम हृदये श्रीरामः Śrī Rāma does indeed sport in my heart" and "ब्रूहि मुकुन्देति रसने—केशव माधव गोविन्देति, कृष्णानन्द सदानन्देति।—chant, chant, the Name of Mukunda! Extol aloud, Keśava, Mādhava, Govinda!" Again, he could humbly pray for forgiveness for all acts of impiety, over-awed by the unutterable Majesty of Śiva—Oh Lord, whatever I might have uttered, prompted thereto by adversity or by ignorance, may Thou condone them! May Thou shed Thy Grace on me!

भगवन् बालतया वाभक्त्या वाप्यापदाकुलतया वा।
मोहाविष्टतया वा मास्तु च ते मनसि यदुरुक्तं मे॥
(*Śiva-Mānasika-Pūjā* 29)

And dead as he was to all tender emotions, he could still be sublimely poetic when lost in the contemplation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa playing sweetly, sweetly on the flute, on the banks of the Yamunā where sages meditate in silence, where the fragrant breeze from the Malaya hills blows gently wafting the exquisite fragrance of the full-blown flowers, where the Kokilas and parrots warble and pour forth their tide of unpremeditated minstrelsy, and where the fleecy rain clouds float aloft in the heavens, like the curls on the forehead of Śrī Kṛṣṇa! And Kṛṣṇa Himself, how lovely in His garland of Tulasī, surrounded by the adoring celestial hordes! And the dulcet music of His Muralī ravishes and thrills the hearts of even Paramahaṃsas!

गायति वनमाली—मधुरं गायति वनमाली।
पुष्पसुगन्धिसुमलयसमीरे मुनिजनसेवितयमुनातीरे।
कूजितशुकपिकमुखखगकुञ्जे कुटिलालकबहुनीरदपुञ्जे।
तुलसीदामविभूषणहारी जलजभवस्तुतसद्गुणशौरी।
परमहंसहृदयोत्सवकारी परिपूरितमुरलीरवधारी॥

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Our task, Herculean in magnitude, but not so successful, perhaps, is ended. In these long series of articles we have sought to prove that not merely is Bhakti not incompatible nor inconsistent with Adwaita Jñāna, but is an integral aspect of it, hardly different from it. And to show that Adwaita is truly consistent with the spirit of the Upaniṣads, we cited, inextenso, passages from the Śrutis. And in refutation of the alleged Avaidic nature of the Māyāvāda, we have examined all the Khyātivādas that obtain currency in the field of Philosophy, and have illustrated how the Anirvachanīya Khyāti reflects the ideas of the Śrutis more truly and fully than any other Khyātivāda does. We have then defined the nature of Bhakti, and how, apparently, it differs so widely from Adwaita Jñāna. The problem of Īśwara in His Personal and Impersonal aspects was examined at length. That the Personality of Īśwara is not inconsistent with His Impersonality, nor again with His Nirguṇatva was proved in the light of Mīmāṃsā exegetics. The nature of Bhakti and the qualifications of the Bhakta were then considered in detail. The final identity of the highest Bhakti with the highest Adwaita Jñāna was proved by an elaborate consideration of passages from that very treasure-house of Bhakti, the *Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*. And all possible objections against Bhakti being identical

with Jñāna were next considered. And it was finally proved that the highest Bhakta becomes the highest Jñānī, through the entire catharsis of his petty ego, gets merged in the Saguṇeśwara, becomes His emissary in the fulfilment of His Divine Purpose, and, at the end of aeons, when every Jīva, without exception, has realized his Brahmahood, gets merged, along with the Jagat and Īśwara, into the Nirguṇa Brahma. It was further shown how the highest Brahma-Jñāna is no bar to the rapturous experience of Bhakti. Just as we oftentimes delight to watch and caress our own face reflected in the mirrors, although we are fully aware of the reflections being not other than ourselves, so too, the Jñānī, though fully aware of his essential nature as Brahma, would nevertheless delight to polarize himself, as it were, into Īśwara and Bhakta, and would revel in those exquisite raptures which such a polarization brings about. And hence, we sought to illustrate the rapturous outbursts of Bhakti unto Īśwara, in which the Adwaita Jñānīs revel, from their own writings, adducing a few random excerpts therefrom. And in conclusion we aver that Bhakti and Bhakti alone must ripen, must mellow into Jñāna, and all other talk of Jñāna, divorced of all Bhakti, is pure lunacy if not hypocrisy. For Bhakti, in the last analysis, is the worship of none other than the Antarātmā and fixity therein—स्वात्मतत्त्वानुसन्धानं भक्तिरित्यपरे जगुः (*Vivekachūḍāmaṇi* of Śrī Śankarāchārya).

And this humble effort of ours has been voyaging on the vast oceans of Adwaita and Bhakti these four years. And in this perilous voyage on these dangerous waters, we always sought to keep clear of shoals and quagmires of theologic dogma and controversy; we always sought to guard against wrecking the frail craft against the hidden rocks of Errors and Misconceptions. And if this frail craft—our humble effort—has reached its haven at last, it is due to the skill of the Person at the helm—the Antaryāmī within us—who, through His Infinite Grace, made ideas well up in our minds—ideas which our feeble intellectual make-up and halting erudition would never have possibly evolved and co-ordinated. So, all glory, all praise, all hail unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Indweller in our hearts, Kṛṣṇa than whom we know nothing higher !

For most, or all, of us, Adwaita Jñāna is an ideal far far beyond us,—as far from us as the solar orb in the heavens. But certainly every one of us is capable of Bhakti unto Īśwara. And it is His duty—if we may say so—to transmute that Bhakti to Jñāna with the Alchemy of His Grace. For, does He not Himself declare तेषां सततयुक्तानां...... ददामि बुद्धियोगं । On those that are devoted unto Me, I bestow Jñāna; for is not the Jñānī dearest unto Him, and therefore, will He not make His Bhakta a Jñānī so that he might be dearest unto Himself ? And so let us pray for this and this alone: May we with our tongue extol Thy excellences; May our ears delight in hearing Thy stories ; May our hands be ever engaged in Thy service; May our minds ever contemplate on Thy Feet, May our heads be ever bowed in reverence unto the world which is Thy Abode. And may our eyes ever see those righteous souls, those Mahā Bhaktas in whom Thou ever dwellest !

वाणी गुणानुकथने श्रवणौ कथायां
हस्तौ च कर्मसु मनस्तव पादयोर्नः ।
स्मृत्यां शिरस्तव निवासजगत्प्रणामे
दृष्टिः सतां दर्शनेऽस्तु भवत्तनूनाम् ॥

(*Bhāgavata* X. x. 38)

(*Concluded*)

The Three Stages of Karma

—By Jayadayal Goyandka

Every Karma or voluntary act, which is either noble or ignoble or of a mixed type, has three stages. It is called 'Kriyamāṇa' when it is being actually performed with some interested motive as well as with attachment and sense of doership. Every action thus performed stays in the form of a potentiality (Adṛṣṭa), which results in a pleasurable or painful experience to the doer in a subsequent birth or even in the present birth under exceptional circumstances, according as the action is good or evil. The totality of such potentialities accumulated in numberless previous births as well as in the present birth and which are not yet ripe for fruition but lie stored up in what is known as the Karmāśaya (the seat of such potentialities) has been termed as 'Sañchita'. Such of these potentialities as are ripe for fruition and determine the nature of birth and the span of life in a particular birth and bring enjoyment or punishment as an occasion for pleasure and pain* go by the name of Prārabdha or destiny. A 'Kriyamāṇa' is also known by the name of 'Puruṣārtha' or personal effort; but an action which is free from attachment to the fruit and is not accompanied with a sense of doership is, really speaking, no 'action' at all (*Gītā* IV. 20; XVIII. 17).

Of the aforesaid three stages of action, it is the 'Sañchita' (or the accumulated potentialities of our actions) which is responsible for the good and evil promptings or impulses of our mind; but it lies within our power to translate these impulses into action or to control them. Even a noble impulse proves abortive when it is not acted upon for want of adequate effort on our part. Prārabdha or destiny too is responsible for our impulses and our actions follow these impulses. But here a man is not bound to act upon these impulses. Of course, he must reap the fruit of his Prārabdha. If a propitious fate awaits him, he will get good results even without any effort on his part either without anybody's will or through another's will. He will get unhappy results too in a similar way. As for a fresh voluntary act (Kriyamāṇa), it invariably yields fresh results. Certainly an act of this kind will

* As a matter of fact, the individual soul experiences such pleasure or pain only in its state of ignorance. Pleasure or pain does not inhere in a particular event, object or circumstance; it depends on our notion of agreeability or otherwise of a thing and this notion has its root in ignorance. Hence birth in a particular womb, the length of one's existence in a particular body and the experiences undergone in that existence bring pleasure or pain only to the ignorant. In the eyes of the wise there exists nothing but Brahma, who is consciousness and Bliss solidified and who is their own self. Similarly in the eye of a devotee all that exists is God and His sport. The Divine Player and His Play are identical. Therefore he too, instead of perceiving agreeability or disagreeability sees God everywhere; that is why he too does not experience any pleasure or pain. He feels enraptured every moment at the sight of the varied sports of the Lord, which are identical with the Lord Himself.

not as a rule yield its fruit immediately. If our effort is powerful enough, it is readily converted into a fresh Prārabdha and supersedes an older Prārabdha which was ripe for fruition. Suppose a man's Prārabdha does not preordain the birth of a son to him; but if he performs a Putreṣṭi sacrifice with due ceremony, this act of his is converted into a fresh Prārabdha and causes the birth of a son. For example, Sāvitrī was able to secure a boon of long life for her husband, Satyavān, from Yama (the god of death) by propitiating the latter through her devotion to her lord. This too was a case of fresh Prārabdha, generated by a powerful effort (Kriyamāṇa). In the case of temporal results, however, it is the Prārabdha generated by our former actions which is mainly responsible. As has been shown above, our impulses proceed from the Sañchita (the stock of accumulated potentialities of previous actions that have not yet borne fruit); the nature of our birth, the duration of life in a particular body and our welcome or unwelcome experiences in that life, all of which are attended with pleasure and pain, are determined by Prārabdha; while our fresh activities are attributable to our personal effort. The following parable is intended to show how Sañchita, Prārabdha and Kriyamāṇa operate when they preponderate one over the other.

There were three friends sitting together at one place. Somebody came and told them that a very great Mahātmā had turned up and was available at a particular place. One of the friends thereupon suggested that they too should go and have his blessed sight. Another expressed his unwillingness to go but did not object to the other two friends going there. The third one agreed to the proposal and the two friends repaired to the place where the Mahātmā was staying. When, however, they reached the place they came to know that the Mahātmā had gone to the city not long before and that he was expected back after some time. Thereupon the third friend, who had accompanied the first, stayed there with a firm resolve to see the Mahātmā, however late he might be in returning from the city. The first one, however, was impatient to go away as he could not afford to wait for such a long time. In this way the third one waited there, while the first one left the place. The Mahātmā, for his part, in course of his perambulations in the city happened to visit the very place where the second friend was, the one who had declined to move from his place in order to have a Darśan of the Mahātmā and had remained where he was. This man was thus blessed with the sight of the Mahātmā at his own place and was saved the trouble of going anywhere else. The Mahātmā then returned to his lodging and there the third friend too, who had been waiting for him all along with a firm resolve to see him, was also blessed with his sight. The second man, who had returned from the Mahātmā's lodging and had not the patience to wait, took a different route while returning, and was thus deprived of the Mahātmā's sight. In the case of the first of these three men his accumulated potentialities of noble acts done in a previous life were predominant; it was these potentialities which accounted for his impulse to visit the Mahātmā; but due to slackness of effort he declined to wait for the Mahātmā even after reaching his place and returned without seeing

him. In the case of the second man his propitious Prārabdha or good destiny preponderated and it was this Prārabdha which brought about his meeting with the Mahātmā at his own place. In the case of the third man, however, his noble effort was the uppermost; this made him wait for the Mahātmā with a firm resolve to see him, and he returned only after obtaining his sight. The above parable too establishes the supremacy of human effort.

There are four objects of human endeavour, viz., religious merit, worldly possession, sensuous enjoyment and final beatitude. For the attainment of religious merit and final beatitude human effort is the principal factor; while for securing worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment Prārabdha or destiny is the primary requisite. Ignorant folk conveniently leave Dharma (religious merit) and Mokṣa (final beatitude) to their Prārabdha and thus remain deprived of the same; for devotion to one's sacred duties and the endeavour to attain Mokṣa are fresh acts and not the fruit of deeds committed in some previous existence. A man's good disposition and accumulated potentialities of noble deeds committed in previous lives are helpful inasmuch as they inspire such devotion and endeavour. As for Prārabdha it interferes with the pursuit of Dharma and Mokṣa in the case of a man of feeble will by inducing unwelcome circumstances like illness and the loss of welcome objects; while in some cases it proves helpful by procuring the fellowship of saints etc. But the principal factor in the pursuit of Dharma and Mokṣa is self-effort; for Dharma and Mokṣa cannot be pursued as a matter of course. Therefore, for the pursuit of Dharma and Mokṣa a man should fall back upon the goodwill of exalted souls and strive with resolution and assiduity.

PRĀRABDHA

For securing worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment ignorant folk commit various sins like lying, deceit, thieving, adultery and so on; but they gain nothing thereby. They get only as much as was pre-assigned to them by fate, which they would surely get even if they did not commit any sin. A man deliberately perpetrates sinful acts, but is loth to reap their fruit in the shape of suffering. But despite all his efforts to escape it, he must reap their consequences in the shape of misery. Just as the fruit of sin, viz., suffering cannot be averted by our best efforts to counteract it, even so the fruit of our meritorious acts, viz., pleasure in the shape of worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment must be had without any effort on our part. Our attempt to secure these is only a pretext; for the principal factor in attaining them is Prārabdha or destiny. More than what has been allotted to us as our share cannot be had and what has been preordained for us cannot be averted despite our efforts to counteract it; hence it is sheer folly to commit sin for securing worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment.

People ignorantly regard worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment as dependent on their personal effort and spend their life in their pursuit; nay, by committing sins of various kinds they are condemned to demoniac wombs and to the infernal regions ! But if worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment could be had through personal effort, everybody

would grow rich and everybody would have his or her desire fulfilled; for everyone seeks to grow rich as well as to have one's desire fulfilled. But we do not find such a thing happening. In certain cases where worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment are attained as a result of powerful Prārabdha earned in a previous life, ignorant folk attribute this success to their own effort; but they are mistaken. Hence it does not behove a man to waste his life in the pursuit of worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment.

The fruit of one's Prārabdha is reaped in three ways—without anybody's will, through another's will and through one's own volition.

Man courts neither death nor suffering. But as a result of sins committed in previous lives he suffers from the painful effects of a stroke of lightning, pestilence, famine, fire and floods etc.; while some people even die of the same. Similarly, as a result of meritorious deeds done in a former existence, one stumbles on a treasure trove all of a sudden or the value of one's ancestral property is enhanced, which is a source of pleasure to him. In all these cases one reaps the fruit of one's Prārabdha without anybody's will.

Again, as a result of sins committed in a previous life, damage is caused to one's person or property or to one's own men through a thief or robber, lion or tiger, which is a source of pain to him; and even so, as a result of meritorious deeds done in a former existence, one is adopted by some wealthy man or inherits a kingdom from some monarch, which is a source of pleasure to him. In all these cases one reaps the fruit of one's Prārabdha through another's will.

Man is altogether helpless in the matter of reaping the fruit of his Prārabdha in the form of pleasure or pain without anybody's will or through the will of another as shown above. As a result of sins committed in a previous life one sustains a loss in agriculture and business etc. and the remedial measures adopted by him to counteract his own disease or that of his people yield contrary results, which causes pain to him. Even so, as a result of meritorious deeds done in a former existence, one succeeds in one's voluntary efforts to secure a wife, progeny, wealth, house etc., which are a source of gratification to him. In all these cases one reaps the fruit of one's Prārabdha through one's own will.

In this way the pleasure and pain we experience in our present life is mostly the result of deeds done in a previous existence. But in some cases a powerful act done even in the present life is immediately converted into a Prārabdha and thus gets ripe for fruition in this very life. For example, a man commits sins like adultery etc. and contracts veneral diseases like syphilis, gonorrhoea, spermatorrhoea etc.; and even so another man undertakes with due ceremony and reverence the performance of a sacrifice, austere penance, charity and other meritorious acts with the object of securing a wife, progeny and wealth or curing a disease, and in consequence attains his desired object. To him, however, who assiduously pursues disciplines like Devotion, spiritual knowledge, dispassion and disinterested action etc., Liberation (God-Realization) speedily comes to view in this very life as a result of these practices.

SANCHITA

Of the fresh actions (Kriyamāṇa) that a man performs in his present life, the portion which is immediately converted into Prārabdha and becomes ripe for fruition is exhausted after yielding its fruit; while the rest are included in the accumulated potentialities (Sañchita Karma) of his previous lives. The stock of these potentialities can be attenuated and exhausted through spiritual disciplines like Devotion, Jñāna and disinterested action. Until this stock of our accumulated potentialities is exhausted our round of births does not cease. Whatever actions a man performs—no matter whether they are meritorious, sinful or of a mixed type—abide in his heart in the form of (i) the seeds of pleasure and pain, which determine his future birth, length of life and the nature of pleasurable and painful experience to be undergone in that life; and (ii) Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic proclivities, which go to make up his disposition. Of these twofold potentialities the former disappear after yielding their fruit; while his Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic tendencies persist in the form of his disposition and they incite him to virtuous or sinful acts in future. Therefore, a man should curb his Rajasic and Tamasic proclivities by pursuing Devotion, spiritual knowledge and disinterested action with discernment and dispassion, and release a stream of purely Sattvic thoughts with a view to reforming his nature. By striving in this way a man's accumulated potentialities of past Karma as well as his Rajasic and Tamasic proclivities get obliterated and he becomes qualified for God-Realization.

KRIYAMĀṆA

The actions of a virtuous, sinful or mixed type that one performs with one's mind, speech or body and which are prompted by likes and dislikes, desire, attachment and egotism are termed as 'Kriyamāṇa'; and even those actions that one does in order to reap the fruit of one's Prārabdha through one's own will are comprised in 'Kriyamāṇa'; for apart from what is done as a matter of duty, anything which is done in accordance with or against the Śāstras is either meritorious or sinful and is therefore included in what is known as the 'Kriyamāṇa'.

The ignorant folk who have no faith in God or destiny seek to attain worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment through their personal effort rather than through their destiny—by means of lying, deceit, thieving, adultery and so on; but thereby they cannot achieve any success over and above that which is ensured by their Prārabdha. Whatever they get they get according to their Prārabdha; but, fools as they are they uselessly incur sin by acting contrary to the Śāstras. They, however, who have faith in God and destiny seek to attain worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment by truthful and fair means through acts which are consistent with the Śāstras rather than through any sinful act. They never deviate from truth, equity and virtue even in the clutches of great adversity. Therefore, apart from achieving their object according to their Prārabdha they also earn religious merit thereby.

Actions which are free from partiality and prejudice, desire, attachment and

egotism or are performed for the sake of God or in a spirit of dedication to God are no actions at all; hence they are not comprised in what is known as 'Kriyamāṇa'. Even so acts which are mentally performed in a dream are not included in 'Kriyamāṇa'. For they are not conscious acts; being under the spell of sleep, the doer is helpless during such acts. Hence they fall under the category of actions revealing the fruit of one's Prārabdha without the will of another or through one's own will.

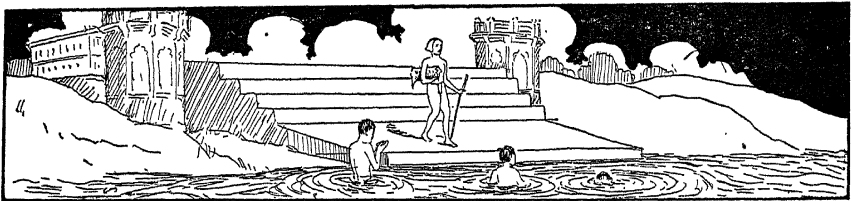
One must reap the fruit of one's Prārabdha; hence the latter is exhausted after yielding its fruit; and if a part of it stands over, it does not interfere with God-Realization. Even after a man has realized God occasions for joy and sorrow will continue to appear in his body as a result of Prārabdha; hence the persistence of Prārabdha causes no harm to him. All one's liabilities in the shape of Prārabdha, Sañchita and Kriyamāṇa can be liquidated and God can be realized through spiritual disciplines like Devotion, spiritual knowledge and disinterested action if practised with discernment and dispassion. A God-realized man has no liabilities in the form of Sañchita; while his fresh actions or Kriyamāṇa as they are called no longer react on him. For actions which are ascribed to him are absolutely free from partiality and prejudice, desire, attachment, egotism and other morbid feelings; hence they are no actions at all. Besides that, since he feels no attachment or aversion with regard to the occurrences that take place through him as a result of his Prārabdha, there is no experiencer of pleasure or pain. Hence even though his Prārabdha stands, it is as good as non-existent; we simply ascribe to him occurrences that serve as an occasion for joy and sorrow. But a man who is altogether free from morbid feelings like pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, has no connection whatsoever, as a matter of fact, with occurrences serving as an occasion for joy and sorrow and attributable to his Prārabdha. Hence his Prārabdha too stands virtually exhausted.

The Śruti says:—

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।
क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥

(*Muṇḍ. Up.* II. ii. 8)

"When a man realizes the all-embracing Divinity, the knot of ignorance subsisting in his heart is broken, all his doubts get resolved and his liabilities in the form of Prārabdha, Sañchita and Kriyamāṇa are liquidated."

(*Kalyan*)

The Age of the Vedas

—By V. G. Ramachandran M. A., B. L.

Of all the scriptures of the world, the sacred Vedas of India alone claim an eternal age and the character of 'Apouruṣeya' —not uttered by any human being or Divinity. To the orthodox Hindu it is co-existent with the Supreme Being. Lord Kṛṣṇa proclaims through the *Bhagavad-gītā*: "By means of the Vedas I am to be known—I alone know the meaning of the Vedas." This would indicate that the Vedas co-existed with the Supreme Being and revealed God to Mankind.

The Vedas are the most ancient spoken word, their origin not being fathomable. They were handed over as a divine treasure orally to successive generations of the Ancients of India. The ancient Ṛṣis discovered these Vedic Hymns, which were of a hoarier past, and memorized them. The descendants kept up this ancient custom of memorizing from generation to generation.

But this ancient Hindu claim that the Vedas were eternal led indeed to a good deal of speculation and chronological controversy amongst the latter day savants. Max Muller was the first western scholar to start this controversy. He based his stand on the date of Chandragupta and fixed the date of the Vedas as being pre-Buddhistic and opined, therefore, that the Vedic period preceded 500 B. C. He arbitrarily fixed 200 years as the period in which the Vedic literature of each epoch was chronicled and thereby announced that the beginning of the Ṛgveda poetry, the most ancient of all the Vedas, was from 3,000 to 2,000 B. C.

Dr. Winternitz, another scholar, characterized this as very arbitrary and observed that 200 years for each epoch could as well have been 1,000, 1,500, 2,000 or even 3,000 years. Another Indologist, Tritsy, remarked how strongly the power of suggestion worked in Science. "Thus the purely hypothetical and arbitrary fixation of the Vedic chronology by Max Muller without any proofs seemed to assume in course of time the appearance and character of a scientifically proved fact." Jacobi and Balagangadhar Tilak (author of the 'Arctic Home') traversed astronomical data and tried to fix 4,500 B. C. as being the mature Vedic period.

Some chroniclers theorized about the date of the Mahābhārata and thereby tried to get at the Vedic Age. From the statements in the *Rājatarangiṇī*—the chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir, the interval between the birth of Parīkṣit (in mother's womb during the Bhārata war) and the coronation of Nanda of Magadha was about 1,500 years. Nanda's coronation took place in 425 B. C. That would place 425 PLUS 1,500 PLUS 1951=3,886 as the number of years before which the Bhārata war took place. The date of Śrī Rāma was fixed 500 years earlier, while 500 years were assigned to the Sūtras, 1,000 years to the Brāhmaṇa period and 1,000 years for the Vedic period. This calculation would denote the early Ṛgvedic age as not later than 3,887 PLUS 3,000=6,886 years. Is this calculation irrefutable ? Now again it is the 5,045th year of the Kali Era, which dates from the coronation

of Yudhiṣṭhira. Assigning the same periods as above for the age of the Rāmāyaṇa, Sūtra, Brāhmaṇa and Veda, we can as well fix the earliest Vedic date as 8,000 years ago. Nothing prevents our assigning more years for the periods of the Sūtra, Brāhmaṇa etc., in which event the earliest Ṛgveda poetry could be dated as 10,000 or 25,000 years ago or even more.

Then again among the astronomical enthusiasts Mr. P. C. Sengupta in his 'Chronology of the Vedas' details out the various internal data in the Ṛgvedic hymns, which afford him material to calculate the probable date of the hymns. In Ṛgveda 1.117.222 it is said, "You replaced, O Aświns, with the head of the horse, the head of Dadhīchi, the son of Atharvan; and hence, true to his promise, he revealed to you the science of Madhu (spring), which he had learnt from Twaṣṭā." Madhu and Mādhava are the two months of Spring of the Vedic tropical year. Mr. Sengupta calculated that in 1942 A. D. the mean celestial longitude by Arietis was 3,604.

The total change till 1931 A. D. was calculated with reference to the celestial longitude of Arietis as 36° 41' 50" PLUS 40° 56' 44"=81° 31' 38" which represented a lapse of 5,925 years ignoring the proper motion of Arietis. The date of 5,925 years takes us to 3,995 B. C. or 4,000 B. C. as the date of the Veda, which would be the date when as in the hymn above-quoted Twaṣṭā communicated to Dadhīchi the celestial signal of the heliacal rising of Arietis for the advent of spring at the latitude of Krurkṣetra.

Mr. Sengupta then again found in ṚK 1.32 and 23.2 that Indra as the god of Summer Solstice became 'Maghavan', the slayer of Vṛtra (Dark clouds). This happens with the heliacal rising of Maghā (or Leonis) in the Vedic age, when people counted the seasons by the heliacal rising of some bright star at dawn. Calculating the celestial longitude of Leonis the lapse in years was found to be 6,100 and thus the date of the hymn was fixed as 4,170 B. C. Then again Mr. Sengupta found in ṚK 1. 161. 3 (Vāmadeva's hymn) a reference to the heliacal rising of the Dog Star and by the same calculation fixed the date of the hymn as 2,760 B. C. The traditions of Indra's victory over the Asuras as on the Summer solstice day in the Mahābhārata is placed on the 12th Tithi of the bright half of the lunar month Bhādrapada and the moon near Śravaṇa (Aquilae). The Vedic period, when calculated as earlier to this, was sought to be fixed as 4,009 B. C. Mr. Sengupta in ṚK 1.51.3; 1.111.7; 1.119.6 etc., further found reference to the solar eclipse and Atri taking shelter from the scorching heat followed by the thaw of Himalayan ice. He opined that that could have happened only when the rising of the Arietis was in the east at the end of evening twilight, which astronomical event could be about 4,000 B. C.—the time favourable to the thaw of Himalayan ice.

Again V. B. Ketkar proved from a statement in the *Taittirīya* Brāhmaṇa 3. 4.1.5 that Bṛhaspati or the planet Jupiter was first discovered when confronting or nearly occulting the star Tiṣya about 4,650 B.C. Mr. Dhirendra Nath Mukhopadhyaya proved from the Vṛṣākapi hymn (Ṛk X. 68) that "When the vernal Equinoctial colure passed through the group (Orion) in B. C. 30,000 or so, sacrifices were offered to Vṛṣākapi. Later Vṛṣākapi rose on the equator (B. C.

23,000), but people were still sacrificing to Vṛṣākapi... ..." This takes us to periods as hoary as 30,000 B. C. or less.

Historians who tried to fix the date of the Indo-Aryan migration into India as 2,000 B. C. were countered by Dr. Winternitz, who opined that the date was arbitrary and that this event could be any date from 0 to 500 B. C.

The geographical evidence in the Ṛgveda points to a vast sea cutting off South India from the Punjab, Kashmir and Gandhara, and connecting the Bay of Bengal with the Araban Sea. Mr. Wadia, the geologist, was of the opinion that the Pleistocene sea over the Gangetic plain lasted for thousands of years. Mr. H. G. Wells had depicted a map of India of 50,000 years to 25,000 years ago wherein such a sea was shown. In this event Ṛgveda hymns could have been composed at least 25,000 years ago. This Gangetic trough gradually dried up yielding place to the Gangetic plain for the development of the Aryan culture. The pleistocene age, geologists opine, lasted up till 2,00,000 years ago. The prior pliocene age covered 2, 50, 000 years.

The Pleistocene sea is nearer the mark than the miocene or pliocene epoch, when man could not have existed according to informed geological and anthropological opinion. The geologists and the archeologists trace man up to the quarternary or glacial epoch. We have umpteen references in the Ṛgveda to the glacial epoch. (ṚK 10. 124. 9; ṚK. 10. 30. 3 and 4; ṚK 10. 136. 5; ṚK 1. 131. 4.) In the Zend Avesta of the Persians we find patriarch Jima buildding a trench shelter to preserve all species to survive the deluge of rain and snow. The Ṛgveda is definitely far anterior to Zend Avesta. Zoraster, the prophet of Zend Avesta, according to Greek History, lived 6,000 years before the invasion of Greece by Xerves, the King of Persia, in 480 B. C. So Zoraster's date is 480 PLUS 6,000 PLUS 1951=8,431. years from now. Jima must have lived in a far earlier glacial period, which may have been 10,000, 30,000 or 80,000 years ago. The Vedic glacial age is also hoary in point of Time. There were 2 glacial ages according to European scholars, while they were Four according to the Americans. The Vedic age cannot be earlier than the first of the glacial period *i. e.*, 80,000 years ago.

On this reasoning we seem to trace the Vedas into a dim past leading to eternity—with no precision about it.

Then again from the evidence of smashed pieces of skull in the Interglacial period found on the Pilt down, the age of the Homoneoderthal man was roughly fixed as 50,000 years ago. The Neanderthal man was dated to more than 2,00,000 years and he had knowledge of fire, lived in caves and could hunt. The first man, according to H. G. Wells, who exterminated the Neanderthal man lived in an ice age which gradually yielded place to vegetation, pastoral life etc. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* it is said that in the Kṛta Age (Satya Yuga) the Aryans were a no-madic race, that they left their arctic homes in Sumeru due to a deluge of snow and found their final resting place in the pastoral fields of ancient Āryāvarta—the Gangetic plain. If the Aryan entry into Europe was considered to have taken place, 25,000 years ago, the Aryan civilization in the Indus valley could not be

later than 25,000 years ago. This would take the Vedic age to be more ancient in origin.

Thus we have had a roving discovery of the Vedic age and the conclusions sought to be arrived from the various data are really confusing and contradictory. From Max Muller's 1,000 B. C., to B. G. Tilak's 45,000 B. C., Sengupta's varied astronomical findings, viz., 4,170 B. C., 2,760 B. C., 4,089 B. C., the Mahābhārata battle basis, viz., 8,000 B. C. or 6,886 B. C., the Vṛṣākapi theory, viz., 30,000 B. C. the glacial age theory viz., 10,000, 30,000 or 80,000 B. C., the Aryan entry into Āryāvarta theory, viz., 25,000 B. C. etc.,—all these, though based on some data, are nevertheless controversial and contradictory and cannot be accepted as inviolable certainties. One may only come to the conclusion that the Vedic age must have been very ancient in fact, the most ancient civilized epoch in world's history.

When we delve into the internal evidence of the Ṛgveda itself to gauge the age of the Veda, we are left still more staggered. All the four ages, the Bone (Ṛk 1.184.13) and Stone Age (Ṛk 1.56.6) the Copper and Bronze Age, the Iron (Ṛk 1.52.8; 1.81.4) and the Gold Age (Ṛk 10.23.3; 5.27.2) are depicted in the Vedic hymns. In the Vedic hymns there are references to popular assemblies (Ṛk 1.2.5; 1.166.9; 10.71.10), to the king and his Ministers (Ṛk 4.4.1) to physicians (10.96.6) and labouring classes (10.106.10) and to the existence of Script (6.53.7 & 8); all these indicate the peak of civilization of the early Aryans. Some scholars have opined that such development of Vedic culture could be graded into ten epochs each of 1,000 years. Thus calculated it will be 15,000 years prior to 5,000 B. C. for the Ṛgvedic era.

These periods of development were broadly classed into three ages in the Ṛgveda itself. An Ancient past is significantly recited in the Ṛk 8.58.8 where Ṛṣi Kaṇva Medhya says, "Some became drunk by the gods from ancient days." Yet again in Ṛk 1.129.5 "Oh fierce Indra! As you in old days led our ancestors by showing the path lead us in the same way." In Ṛk 5.21.5 a distinct classification of the ancient medievial and modern is depicted where Bharadwāja Ṛṣi says, "Oh Indra, the founder of many works ! The ancients of *Past-time* (Angiras etc.) became your friends engaging themselves into sacrificial works like *present* days. The people of the *middle* period and *present* day became likewise."

Despite the great and long period covered by these three periods and despite the extreme reluctanace on the part of the Ṛṣis to make any change in the wording of the sacred texts and formulas (their unchangeability giving them added sanctity) yet there is clear evidence in the Ṛgveda of such change in the later age with a view to make the Mantras more intelligible to the learned of that period. The Vedic litanies sung by the Ṛṣis of particular Family got enriched by the additions time to time into the 'Saṃhitā' of each family. In Ṛk 7. 39. 2—it is stated that the Mantra came down to the Ṛṣi from his ancestors clothed in white and graceful robes, indicating the antiquity of the Mantra and later polishing.

What we have in the four Vedas, Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda, is only the hymns that are now known. Myriads of Mantras have been lost to us. In the Ṛgveda we have only the Śākala school left. The 'Veda-Mata' is legendarily spoken of as a great huge mountain 'Veda-Giri' whose heights no seer can hope to climb and conquer. Legend has it that sage Bharadwāja vowed to live eternally and get reborn merely to learn and chant the entire Vedas. After years of rigorous renunciation and practice of Veda-Tapas the Māyā was lifted from his eyes to show him the magnitude of the Vedagiri, beside which his own Veda-Tapas was shown as a mole-hill. The legend goes on to say that a myriad lives too cannot accomplish a mastery of the entire Veda, much of which is yet not discernable by mankind. Patañjali speaks of 31 branches of Ṛgveda, 100 branches of Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, 15 of Śukla Yajurveda, 1,000 of Sāmaveda and 9 of Atharvaveda. But there are now-a-days only one branch (Śākala) of Ṛgveda, 4 of Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, 1 of Śukla Yajurveda, 3 of Sāmaveda and 2 of Atharvaveda. In Ṛgveda (the most ancient of the Vedas) the object of devotion was the gods, while sacrifice was only a means. In Yajurveda (which is definitely of a later date) sacrifice itself becomes the centre of thought and desire. The Soma sacrifice is elaborated in Sāmaveda, third Veda in point of time. The science of war and invocation of the power of gods is detailed in the last Veda—Atharvaveda. The formation of alluvial plains from Magadha to Anga is mentioned in Atharvaveda, which event geologically would have been 15,000 or 20,000 years ago. This would place the Ṛgveda epoch earlier than 50,000 years ago, giving each prior Vedic epoch about 10,000 years of duration. Even the compilation of each Veda must have taken thousands of years, as it will be evident from the fact that the Ṛgveda points to the bronze age while the Yajurveda period was predominantly of the iron age. Even in one Veda such as the Ṛgveda we have varied types of civilization depicting pastoral life, at another time a full-fledged society with a king and assemblies, at one time pointing to the use of iron, silver, coin, script etc. All this indicates development over 10,000 years or even more for each Vedic epoch.

We can only speak of the discovery and recitation of the Vedic hymns by the various Ṛṣis. When these hymns originally came into being nobody knows. Tradition has it that they have been recited, memorized and handed over from generation to generation from immemorial times. The furthest origin is almost shrouded in mysterious eternity. Further if we compare the sacrificial formulas in the Yajurveda, particularly the 'Nigadas' and 'Nivids' preserved in the 'Brāhmaṇas' and 'Sūtras', with the bulk of the Ṛgvedic hymns one may conclude that the former are more ancient. Many of these Nivids have been lost. So the Śākala Ṛgveda originally should have had a lot of Nivids, which owing to passage of time and lack of proper oral traditional remembrances must have been lost to us. The earliest known Ṛgvedic hymns take us not only to a knowledge of the glacial age but also to characters who lived about that age.

There is yet again a remarkable thing about our Veda. Language experts would have it that ordinarily languages did change from age to age rapidly and by this

test we can fix the age of any particular literature. But what baffles us is that this test wholly fails with reference to the Vedas, who seem to be immutable, unchangeable and eternal. One scholar felt that the Ṛgveda language was so little different from old Persian of 6 B. C. Could we, then, fix 6 B. C. as the age of Ṛgveda? Dr. Winternitz opined once that there was a change for every 200 years in the Vedic period; but Mr. Abinash Chandra Das rightly questioned it and asked what was there to disprove that it had remained unchanged for 1,500 years or more. For one thing the structure of the Vedic language is admirable, admitting of 'no change' for ages to come. Their efficacy depended on how, when and by whom they were pronounced, as there were complicated rules for their recitation and accentuation. The letters and the Swaras were preserved by the rules of recitation such as 'Krama', 'Jaṭā' and 'Ghana' and 'Pada'. Yet again the manner of pronouncing each letter was clearly depicted in the Veda itself as to whether the pronunciation should start from the tongue, teeth, throat etc. The measure of the sound of each letter, the time to be taken between each letter and letter, word and word—all these are systematically and firmly dealt with. This necessitates the language being kept intact for ages to come. This is peculiar to Sanskrit and Veda. That is why Sanskrit is considered the most ancient of languages—in fact, as the language of the gods. But in the case of other languages or scriptures—with the passage of even a century we note a change in a word and even grammar; also new words may come in. But the Vedic hymns stand out as a huge rock unchangeable by time. It is, therefore, almost foolish to embark on the quest to determine the age of the Vedas by this language-change test—or in fact, by any other tests, as we have seen how all these tests baffle or fail us, how tests by historical, geographical, astronomical, geological or by internal evidence in the Vedas—all these gave us contradictory conclusions ranging from 500 B. C. to 80,000 B. C. and more. These tests and conclusions look more or less arbitrary or uncertain, though based on some kind of datum. The datum itself is often illusory and uncertain. We can never for a certainty fix the last day or the first day of the Vedas. Even if we say that they were probably compiled or collected (not originated) between an unknown year and 600 B. C., we cannot visualize when exactly the original unwritten word of the Vedic hymn came into being. Man is yet too puny to know it. As we started on the authority of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Vedas coexisted with the Supreme Being and they, in fact, revealed God to mankind.

This divine existence of the Vedas can alone explain the eternity of ancient Hindu civilization, while many an ancient civilization such as those of Ancient Rome, Ancient Greece, Babylon, Mexico etc. have all perished into oblivion. It is this live Vedic Force that has kept Āryāvarta as the beacon of undiminished wisdom. So long as the Vedas live (which are eternal) India and Hinduism live. It behoves us, therefore, to keep up the flame of our Vedic culture strongly alive. If we lose our Vedic strength by sheer neglect, we lose our life-force and will certainly sink into oblivion as the Ancient Romans. Our Independent Republic of India has,

therefore, a grand bed-rock of Vedic culture as its foundation. It is for our state and the public to protect, foster and promote this Vedic culture in their own selfish interest. The Vedas may be eternal. But if we lose our link with the Vedas we alone will sink, though the Vedas may lie hidden for the future Ṛṣis to re-discover. The Vedas cannot be preserved by script. The Vedic hymn has to be chanted in the allotted manner. It cannot be read in the ordinary way. By its very nature it has always been a spoken hymn, in which character alone can it be preserved. Modern conditions have relegated this capacity to recite the Vedas to a very few orthodox Hindus very often in economic distress. If these few take to other avenues of life by sheer economic necessity, then woe unto our civilization! It, therefore, behoves our state and Society to encourage Vedic learning and place the Vedic scholars above want. It is the Vedic culture that has kept up the unity of India from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas. It is this unity of culture that impelled the great Àdi Śankara to re-establish all Vedic Maṭhas ("Shaṇmaṭhasthāpana"). Jawaharlal Nehru in his memorable book 'The Discovery of India' pays a grand tribute to Àdi Śankara for re-establishing this ancient unity of India throughout the length and breadth of India. So, then, if we keep up our Vedic culture, we survive as a nation; else we shall perish.

So to measure the age of the Veda betokens only our smallness and pigmy-mindedness; for it is immeasureable. We can as well expend our full energies in studying and imbibing to the full the ancient truths revealed in the Vedas and acting up to them. Then alone can we realize the full length of human wisdom just like Dadhīchi, son of Atharvan, of the Àngirasa clan, who proclaimed in a Vedic hymn the oneness of the creator and the created thus: "I am He—the same Puruṣa—that is present everywhere."

Vision of Vagisa

— By N. Kanakaraja Iyer, B. O. L.

In English literature we come across a Vision of Mirza. It represents the heights to which a philosophical mind can go in a purely material atmosphere. Addison was not a good speaker, but he was able to put all his mystic thoughts in his cryptic writings. He lived the life of a silent spectator of a most noisy world. Hence we are able to obtain such beautiful gems in his random thoughts. His famous character Sir Roger De Coverly is more a dreamer than a rational being of this world.

In our own literature we have the life of a purely religious soul, Śrī Vāgīśa Muni. It was his great ambition to go to Śrī Kailāsa in his own physical body. He walked the great distance from the southernmost extremity of our Bhārat. He met with many difficulties on his way. He came almost as far as the great lake Mansarovar. But he was made to retrace his steps. He did not actually retrace. He was taken to the south once again by the grace of Śrī Kailāsanātha. He saw a beautiful vision there. In the vision of Vāgīśa we have the quintessence of Śaiva Siddhānta. Before we have a view of this mystic vision we should trace the paths through which this great sage arrived at that insurmountable height. His life is a great search after truth. Mahatma Gandhi says that his own life was a great experiment with truth. Truth is one, but it has many facets. The seeker after real truth attains the end only when he finds the truth in himself. In his own inner self he realizes the greatest truth of our ancient sages.

Vāgīśa Muni was a great seeker of absolute truth from his infancy. His life of about eighty-one years was spent in this one quest. He had no worldly bondages even from his early childhood. He has bequeathed to us a great collection of soul-stirring religious hymns. Though a great majority of them have been lost, what is handed down to us by devoted souls is not an insignificant pile. He is styled as a Śaiva Samaya-Āchārya. There are four Śaiva Samaya-Āchāryas, Śrī Jñānasambandha, Śrī Vāgīśa, Śrī Sundaramūrti and Śrī Māṇickavāchaka. Of these four he happens to be the earliest according to historians. He was a senior contemporary of Śrī Jñānasambandha. He was a very old sage when Śrī Jñānasambandha was making his early pilgrimages as a child saint. Both these great souls belong to the seventh century A. D.

To study the life of such a great mystic we have to delve deep in his own outpourings of prayerful thoughts which are embedded in his simple but deep and subtle poetry. That great biographer Sekkizhar has devoted more than four hundred stanzas to depict the life of our saint in his *Peria-Purāṇam.* Through these sources we can trace the beautiful river of Vāgīśa's life and his vision. His mission in life was nothing but a clear exposition of his great vision. He did not preach on a single pulpit, but he lived that mission. Hence it is our great

fortune to observe his vision through the mirror of his long and well-spent life.

Tirumunaippadi Nadu is a small but in no way an unimportant portion of the Tamil land. It gave birth to two of the Śaiva Samaya-Āchāryas and three of the Vaiṣṇava Alwārs. Hence it is a sacred land to the religious-minded. The Pinākinī waters the fertile fields of this Puṇyabhūmi. Tiruvamore is a small village in this Nadu. Men of industry, education and religion lived in this small village satisfying all their wants easily and naturally.

Karukkaiyar is the name of a farming class in this village. The head of the class was a famous man. His proper name was not pronounced by the simple villagers. He was given an honorific title, Pukazhanar, which can be translated as Kīrtimān or the famous man. He had a dutiful wife as his life's partner. She was named Madiniyar, the sweet woman. He was blessed with a daughter Tilakavatī in his middle age and with a son in his old age. The son was named Marul-Nikkiyar, the destroyer of Illusion. The sister and brother lived in the peaceful home in their early childhood with all felicity because the family was really rich in worldly goods.

Kalippakai, a great warrior in the Tamilnad army, sent word through proper persons offering his hand for Tilakavatī. The parents accepted the well-meant offer. The marriage was to be celebrated in a few days. But as a war broke out at that time between a northern chieftain and the southern chief, Kalippakai had to enlist as a loyal servant of his king. The marriage was postponed. In the meantime Pukazhanar, the father of Tilakavatī, fell ill and shuffled off his mortal coil. Madiniyar followed her lord to the other world instantaneously. Thus the two young children were left alone. Tilakavatī naturally took up the guardianship of her brother. In a very few days news reached from the war zone that Kalippakai valiantly fought and died on the battle-field as befitting a warrior of his ilk. Tilakavatī was in a fix. She knew that her father had decided to give her in marriage to Kalippakai. Hence it was her duty now, she thought, that she should follow her chosen lord to the other world as her mother had done in her presence. The young brother, who was now left an orphan, had to plead strongly and most persuasively to make her desist from that resolve. Tilakavatī after a long meditation decided to live for the sake of her young brother, but she foreswore all thought of marriage or worldly life thereafter. She lived the life of a Gārgī in her own silent meditative mood.

Marul Nikkiyar, in whom we are now really interested, began his early life as a seeker after truth. He learnt the tenets of the Śaiva Religion. He was free with his worldly possessions. His keen intellect grasped all the subtle points of the philosophy that was in vogue in the Tamil land at that time. His thirst for knowledge and more knowledge was not satisfied by the teachers or the books that were available then. Hence he wandered here and there in search of more wisdom and became an apostate. Tilakavatī, that devout Saivite sister of this young scholar, heard of this metamorphosis. As a great fanatical group was pitted against

her and that with the backing of a powerful king, she thought it advisable to approach her Lord in all humility and pray at His lotus feet for the redemption of her young and immature brother.

Tilakavatī was now living a life which had no purpose in this or the other world. The brother for whose sake she decided to live had left her in the lurch and roamed after new pastimes. She yearned for the brother's society, which was now forbidden. The brother, though a great scholar at the present moment, completely forgot his duty towards his sister, who had no other prop in this world. Hence Tilakavatī appealed to her God, the Vīrasthāna Īśwara, at Tiru-Athikai. The God Almighty appeared in a dream and told her that He would wean her young brother from heresy by making him suffer an ailment.

Nikkiyar suddenly fell ill. He felt an excruciating pain in his stomach. His new associates, who were adepts in the art of healing through drugs as well as incantations, tried by all means in their power to heal the malady. Some diagnosed it as colic, others as indigestion, yet others as appendicitis. Whatever the name of the affliction be, Dharmasena lost all taste in this world. His mental faculties weakened, he did not find a way out of this dread disease for about a week. His friends forsook him now, because they were not able to relieve him of his physical pain and mental worry. Nikkiyar now remembered his long forgotten sister. He had had the good fortune to learn the tenets of Saivism from the lips of the very sister whom he had completely effaced from his mind soon after he renounced his faith. He sent a servant to his sister to inform her of his state of health.

Tilakavatī heard the news with subdued anxiety and sent word to the brother that he would be saved by the Grace of God if he had a mind to retrace his steps and pray for absolution with real repentence. Nikkiyar returned to his sister with very great difficulty, unobserved by his fanatic friends. His sister Tilakavatī took him to the temple of Atikai Vīrasthāna Īśwara and bade him prostrate before the holy presence. He fell prostrate in front of the *sanctum sanctorum*, stood up and began to pray to the Lord of his heart. His prayer came out in the shape of a most soul-stirring hymn. Though he had no opportunity till then to woo the Goddess of Muse, he opened his mouth and the hymn came out spontaneously.

"O my God, You are not vanquishing this death-like foe. I do not remember to have committed any very great sin. You have taken me to Your lotus feet. I will not forsake my refuge and I will pray to You all my life. I am not able to bear the pain that is caused by a great revolution in my intestines. O father residing in Atikai Vīrasthāna on the river Cedilam, accept my prayer.

"Through sheer ignorance I left Your domain formerly; for that You punished me with this fell disease. Now that I have become Your slave once again, I pray You to relieve me of this burning malady. Is it not the duty of the great and noble to succour and protect those that come to them for deliverance?

"Verily as a ward who has slipped from the kindly supervision of his guardians,

takes to freedom and goes to a tank for a free dip, I have been amiss in my religious perambulation. Now I feel like one who is thrown into deep waters by unkind strangers while just trying to have a taste of freedom. I am ignorant of how, where, and by what means I am to get out of this immersion. I am unable to bear this great pain in my stomach; O my God, lead me out through Your unbounded love.

"I have not forgotten to perform Your Abhiṣeka (immersion), Archana (worship), Dhūpa and Dīpa Ārādhana (offering incense and light); I have not forgotten You in my happy as well as sorrowful moments. My tongue has never forgotten to chant Your names. Hence now I pray that I may be taken into Your fold once again and this disorder cured.

"O my God with a form resplendent like pure gold, my God with matted locks and with a crescent moon, You have not deigned to grant me freedom from misery and anxiety. If Your devotees are to go through this ordeal, people like me will not have faith in You. Oh my Lord, devotion should suffice; so take me into Your kindly presence.

"You have covered Your body with the outer skin of a great elephant. You are able to dance in the great crematorium of the whole world. Remember Your kindness to the Rākṣasa who attempted to lift Your abode, Śrī Kailāsa. You listened to his Sāmagāna and released him from the condition in which he found himself, crushed in by the great Kailāsa through Your own will-power. Now I pray with all humility, I sweat, roll down on the ground and cry and try to rise up through Your grace."

This was the first Padikam of this great sage. Of the ten stanzas in this Padikam we have taken a majority to give a glimpse of the mental condition of the saint at the moment. The Almighty God embraced the devotee in all His Grace and cured him of his physical, mental and spiritual diseases. He gave the title of Navukkarasu, 'Śrī Vāgīśa', to his devout Bhakta at this moment. Henceforward he was known in the world by this title. He is even now called Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar in the Tamil land. Later day Sanskrit writers tried to translate this beautiful name in Tamil as 'Jihva-Raja'; but it is a purely misconceived translation. Vāgīśa has now left the heretic fold and joined the Śaiva Goṣṭhī once again. We are now to see the effects of this reconversion.

Vāgīśa adorned his physical plane with Vibhūti (sacred ashes) and Rudrākṣa, his mental plane with Śiva-Dhyāna (meditation on Lord Śiva) and his spiritual plane with Śiva-Kainkarya (the role of a servant of Lord Śiva). Of the four steps to reach the Almighty he took Charyā (service) as his own from this day. He took a small grass-cutter and began to tidy the outer Prākāras (walls) of the holy temple. By his spiritual upsurge he was in the highest step, by his speech and action in the third step, by his inward thought in the second step but to outward appearance he was in the fourth step.

Tirunavukkarasu was now persecuted by his enemies and driven to seek refuge in Tiruppatirippuliyur, the modern Cuddalore

Old Town. This is a turning-point in the life of our saint. The residents of Tiruppatirippuliyur assembled in very large numbers, decorated their houses and streets and gave a royal reception to the chosen of God. On seeing this reception Vāgīśa burst forth in praise of his Lord in several Padikams. He expresses his innermost thoughts in all these hymns. One or two we shall try to understand:—

"Him that created the whole universe, Him that will never get old, Him that is wearing the crescent moon on His head, Him that is really capable of the greatest Tapasyā, Him that is liberation personified, Him that is honey and milk to His devotees, Him that resides in Vīrasthāna, Him that is the Overlord of all gods, poor I despised formerly, Ah me!"

Here begins the Sthala-Yātrā of our great soul. Conveyance was scarce and communications were very badly maintained in those days. Hence Vāgīśa Muni had to walk from place to place. In every shrine he visited he prayed to God in his own way and took to his self-imposed task of grass-cutting and tidying the temple compound. In Tirutunganaimadam he prayed his Lord to imprint His Chinhas of 'The trident and Ṛṣabha' in both his shoulders to mark him as God's own slave. His prayer was granted then and there. Śivagaṇas (attendants of Lord Śiva) came to him to accomplish the divine behest. He then traversed many unfrequented roads and went to many Śiva-Kṣetras. In Chidambaram he composed many hymns explaining the subtle truths of Ānanda-Tāṇḍava. From that great shrine he went to Sikazhi, the birth-place of his younger contemporary, Tirujñānasambandha, who was a child at that time. The meeting of these two great souls is depicted in a beautiful stanza by the poet Sekkizhar:—

"Like the meeting of two great seas, one of pure grace and the other of pure love, like the meeting of the two great eyes that were created for the rejuvenation of Śiva religion, like the meeting of the grace of God Almighty who drank the Halāhala-Viṣa for saving the whole universe, and the grace of his inseparable Consort who created the whole universe as Her offspring, the child of divine intellect and pure Jñāna, and the great old king of devotion met and went into the temple of Sikazhi."

Tirunavukkarasu stayed with the divine child for several days. As his mind longed to have Darśana of the God in the shrines in Chola-Deśa he took leave of Jñānasambandha with very great reluctance and went on his pilgrimage. In Tirunallore he had the great fortune of the Śiva-Pada-Dīkṣā. He started thence for other places of pilgrimage. He came to Tingalore on his way.

Abbhuti was a Brahman of great learning. He lived at Tingalore at this time. He performed many kinds of Vedic sacrifices and lived the life of a householder according to his lights. He heard of the great conversion of Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar. He at once became a follower of that great soul even without having an opportunity to meet him in person. His devotion to his chosen Guru knew no bounds. His orthodox mind did not demur to accept Vāgīśa as his great preceptor. The name of the saint was like a great Mantra in his estimation. Hence

he named all his sons after the saintly soul. He even named the measures and weights and even drinking vessels and other utensils after the saint. He was saturated with the saintliness of Tirunavukkarasu through and through. He was rich in worldly goods. He dug some tanks and planted some fruit gardens for common use in charity. He erected some water-sheds on the junction of several roads to serve the passers-by. All these charities were run in the name of Tirunavukkarasu, who was blissfully ignorant of all such selfless actions of Abbhuti.

On his way to Tiruppazhanam, Tirunavukkarasu came near Tingalore. It was a hot summer day. He was naturally very thirsty. He saw a water-shed on the roadside. He entered it with the names of his Lord on his lips, and took a few sips of the cold drink provided there. He passed his eyes on all the water-pots, buttermilk pots and drinking utensils. He raised his eyes to the roof and to the four walls of the shed. Everywhere he saw his own name in bold print and engraving as well as in colour-painting. He did not believe his own eyes and wanted to test the veracity of the visual sense with the help of the other senses. He enquired of the servants in attendance there about his puzzle. He asked, "Friends, may I know who has founded this charity for the benefit of suffering humanity?" The servants told him that it was Abbhuti, who lived in the nearly village. They also informed him that he had just then gone to his house from the water-shed. The selfless soul, Vāgīśamuni, desired to meet this philanthropist who put another's name in the charities he instituted. He walked the short distance and reached the house of Abbhuti. The Brahman householder saw the new guest standing on his portico. He hastened to receive him as enjoined in the Śāstras. On seeing his saintly form he paid due respects to him and took him inside the house. The saint was seated and Abbhuti's wife and children came one by one to pay their respects to the holy guest. After these formalities Tirunavukkarasu bowed low before Abbhuti and asked him, "Sir, may I know why you have painted the name of some other person on the water-shed which you have erected in charity for the use of Śiva-Bhaktas." Abbhuti was put out at this mild enquiry and replied a bit angrily, "Sire, you have not put the query in the right form. Do you mean to say that the name of the great saint who baulked the machinations of a king and his counsellors of Jain persuasion only through his selfless devotion and service to God as the name of some other person? That with real devotion at the feet of our Lord we can attain salvation even in this life was clearly demonstrated by the saint Tirunavukkarasu. If I proclaim his great name to this world through my feeble actions, you speak such unhearable words about it. In this great world created by our Lord, is there a human soul who has not heard of that great saint who came out of the sea on a float of stone? You appear to be a Śiva-Bhakta in form, but you talk like this! May I know where you reside and who you are?" On hearing this ebullition from Abbhuti, Vāgīśa was put to much difficulty in revealing his real self. He knew that Abbhuti knew his history by repute. He also knew that the devout Brahman had not

had opportunities to meet his idol so far in person. Hence he had to introduce himself in a most humble way. "Dear sir," said Vāgīśamuni, "I am that worthless fellow who was punished by God Almighty with an excruciating stomach-ache to cleanse him of all impurities of mind and spirit and then taken into the Śaiva fold by His pure Grace." Abbhuti fell prostrate at once on the feet of his idol, whom he had not cast eyes on up to that moment. He did not find words to express his felicity on this unforeseen meeting. Vāgīśa returned the respects paid to him in due form and took the prostrate figure in a pure embrace. Abbhuti danced, jumped, ran and gambolled like one who had come across a great treasure. Then he took his wife and children once again to the saint and made them receive his blessings. He then requested his divine preceptor to be his guest and asked his better half to prepare all edibles according to the taste of a devotee. The midday meal was prepared in a few minutes. The first son of Abbhuti, whose name was Tirunavukkarasu I, went to the garden to fetch a plantain leaf to serve as a plate for the great soul. As fate would have it, he was bitten by a deadly snake when he was cutting a tender leaf with a sharp knife. Although knew it was his death-messenger, he did not mind his physical pain, ran to his house with the newly cut leaf, and fell down before his mother lifeless as a stone. The mother saw this and understood the whole thing in a moment. With rare presence of mind she covered the body of the dead boy with a mat and made arrangements for serving the meal to the honoured guest. Abbhuti invited the saint to the dining hall. He was seated there. A minute before commencing the meal he gave Vibhūti-Prasāda to all the children and the parents. He noted that one child was missing. His mind misgave him. He felt that something was wrong somewhere and wanted to rectify it at once. Hence he asked the host: "Where is the first boy? He was here a few minutes back; call him that he may also take the Prasāda." Abbhuti was unwilling to reveal the real reason for his disappearance. He told haltingly: "He will not be able to be present now." Vāgīśa divined that some untoward accident must have prevented the boy from being present there. He pressed the host to explain the whole mystery. Abbhuti, though he was not willing to reveal this incident before feeding the rare guest, had now to explain everything. Tirunavukkarasu asked Abbhuti to take the child to the temple of his Lord and followed him there. The child, who was now a corpse, was placed before the *sanctum sanctorum* of Śrī Parameśwara who resided in that temple. Tirunavukkarasu composed and chanted a hymn. This hymn is said to be an effective Mantra for snake-bite even today. Believers chant the hymn for real relief from snake-poison. It gives an idea of the form of the formless Maheśwara through some mystical expressions couched in numbers:—

"One is His mind; one is His residential hill;
One is the crescent moon He wears on His head;
One is the skull He takes as an alms-bowl in His hand.
One is His mount, the Ṛṣabha-Vāhana,

"Two are His feet that are bowed by Devas prayerful;
Two are His ear-rings that convey devotees' prayers.
Two are His forms, man and woman, in one.
Two are His Chinhas, the deer and the battle-axe.
"Three are His eyes—the sun, moon and fire;
Three are the strong prongs of His trident;
Three are His weapons—the bow, the bowstring and arrow.
Three are the fortresses that He destroyed.
"Four are His faces that face the four directions.
Four are the conditions of His Creation (birth, youth, old age and death),
Four are the feet of His mount, the Ṛṣabha.
Four are the Vedas that He has chanted.
"Five are the hoods of the serpent that He wears.
Five are the senses that He has subdued;
Five are the arrows held by him who was burnt by Him,
Five are the dances He has danced (for the benefit of His Bhaktas).
"Six are the forms that He has created;
Six are the faces of His son Subrahmaṇya.
Six are the feet of the bees on His garland,
Six are the tastes He has created for the tongue.

"Seven are the Yugas He has created;
Seven are the seas He has created;
Seven are the worlds that He rules over;
Seven are the Swaras of music He created.

"Eight are His attributes permanent;
Eight are the flowers that He is pleased to have;
Eight are His shoulders turning all directions,
Eight are the quarters that He has created.

"Nine are the gates that he has formed in the human body;
Nine are the threads in the sacred thread on His chest;
Nine are the locks of matted hair on His head,
Nine are the Bhūtas that serve Him as slaves.

"Ten are the eyes and teeth of the serpent He wears;
Ten are the teeth that fell down broken.
Ten are the heads of the Rākṣasa who was crushed by Him.
Ten are the actions of His real devotees."

(To be continued)

The Devotee Par Excellence

—By B. T. Char, B. A.

After His return from exile and His coronation, Lord Śrī Rāma was one day seated on His golden throne with Devī Sītā by His side and His brothers standing on either side rendering fan-service to the Lord, all listening to the scriptural texts being interpreted by great and learned Ṛṣis. Hanumān knelt at the foot of the throne massaging the Lord's feet which rested on a foot-stool, while the Lord's hand played lovingly amongst the curls on Hanumān's head.

In one of the intervals of the discourses the Devī put a question to Her lord, which apparently did not fall on His ears. Waiting for the next interval She addressed Her husband once again and Śrī Rāma did not appear to hear Her this time too. A little nettled by this apparent discourtesy, Sītā slightly raised Her voice and in a hurt tone asked Śrī Rāma the reason for this neglect towards Her, concluding with the words, "My lord, You appear to be engrossed more in fondling Māruti than in anything else." With a smile Śrī Rāma answered, "Yes, dear lady, my mind was engrossed in Māruti, and I did not hear you. I am sorry." "How now, my lord," asked Sītā, "is Hanumān more dear to You than anyone else?" "Yes, love," said Rāma, "Āñjaneya is very dear indeed to me. His devotion to me is unequalled!" Piqued at this open preference of Māruti to Herself Sītā remarked, "Lord, for Your sake and in my all-engrossing love for You, I gave up everything and everybody and for fourteen long years wandered about the forests and suffered untold hardships with no other thought but that of the happiness of serving You. What greater sacrifice than this has Māruti to his credit?"

With an amused smile the Lord replied, "I never said anything in disparagement of Your love or service to me. All that I said was that none excelled Māruti in his devotion to me and I shall demonstrate it to you now." With these words Śrī Rāma pulled out a hair from Māruti's head and held it at Sītā's ear. What was Her astonishment when She heard emanating from that hair the beloved Name of "Rāma, Rāma" in a sweet unending stream! With tears of joy in Her eyes Sītā exclaimed, "Blessed indeed is Māruti, when even the hairs on his body are engrossed in the Japa of the Sacred Name!"

Saved and Blessed

When Thy Holy Names I chant in worship,
Or sing some sacred song to Thy Glory,—
Magna Pater ! I but claim my sonship,
In Thy Peerless Image to grow like unto Thee.

When with Thy devotees I do consort;
To their company greedily resort,—
God Almighty ! I get close to Thee,
For Thou art ever with Thy devotee.

When Thy beauteous creations I do perceive,
And stand a moment, to ponder, wonder, and to see,
Lord of Beauty ! I but Thy Glorious Forms conceive,
For The Creator and His creations are One to me.

And thus in Thy Image a growing,
Thus in Thy company a moving,
Thus Thy Beauteous Glory perceiving,
Fearless am I Saved and Blessed.

Regd. No. A. 334

Ramacharitamanasa Rendered into English

Śrī Rāmacharitamānasa of Goswami Tulasidasa occupies a unique place in the literature of the world. It portrays in mellifluous verses the exploits of Śrī Rāma, the "Ideal Man" (Maryādāpuruṣottama) and is thus full of invaluable lessons for humanity. It shows us the way to perfect bliss here as well as hereafter and deserves to be introduced into every home that seeks lasting peace and happiness. It is an unfailing guide for all those who are keen to tread the path of God-Realization and a mine of priceless treasures for aspirants who have a mind to soar into the lofty and sublime heights of Jñāna, Vairāgya, Bhakti and Sadāchāra. Even as Śrī Rāma had endeared Himself to all and was abhorred by none—not even by His enemies, *Śrī Rāmacharitamānasa* too is equally adored by all. Even as a piece of fine poetry *Śrī Rāmacharitamānasa* stands unrivalled and enjoys a popularity unknown to any other poetical composition. Every verse of it is held sacred as a Mantra and its very recitation with faith and reverence is known to yield all sorts of blessings. The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Goswami Tulasidasa is a name to conjure with in the whole of North India.

In order that the blessings of this marvellous book may be extended even to the English-knowing public, it has been rendered into easy English prose and published along with the translation in three separate volumes in the form of annual special Numbers of the "Kalyana-Kalpataru" (for the years 1949, 1950 and 1951). Each volume contains a number of tri-coloured illustrations and comprises nearly 300 pages. Those who would have a copy of the special Numbers (complete English translation along with the Rāmacharitamānasa in Hindi) can have them for Rs. 2/8/—per volume. As very few copies of these volumes are left in stock, intending purchasers would do well to place their orders at an early date to avoid disappointment.

So far as known to us no other English rendering of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* is available in the market at present. The volumes have thus supplied a long-felt desideratum and will prove a lasting boon to the English-knowing public who would taste the beauties of this immortal work of Goswami Tulasidasa, the greatest saint-poet of North India of the medieval times.

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